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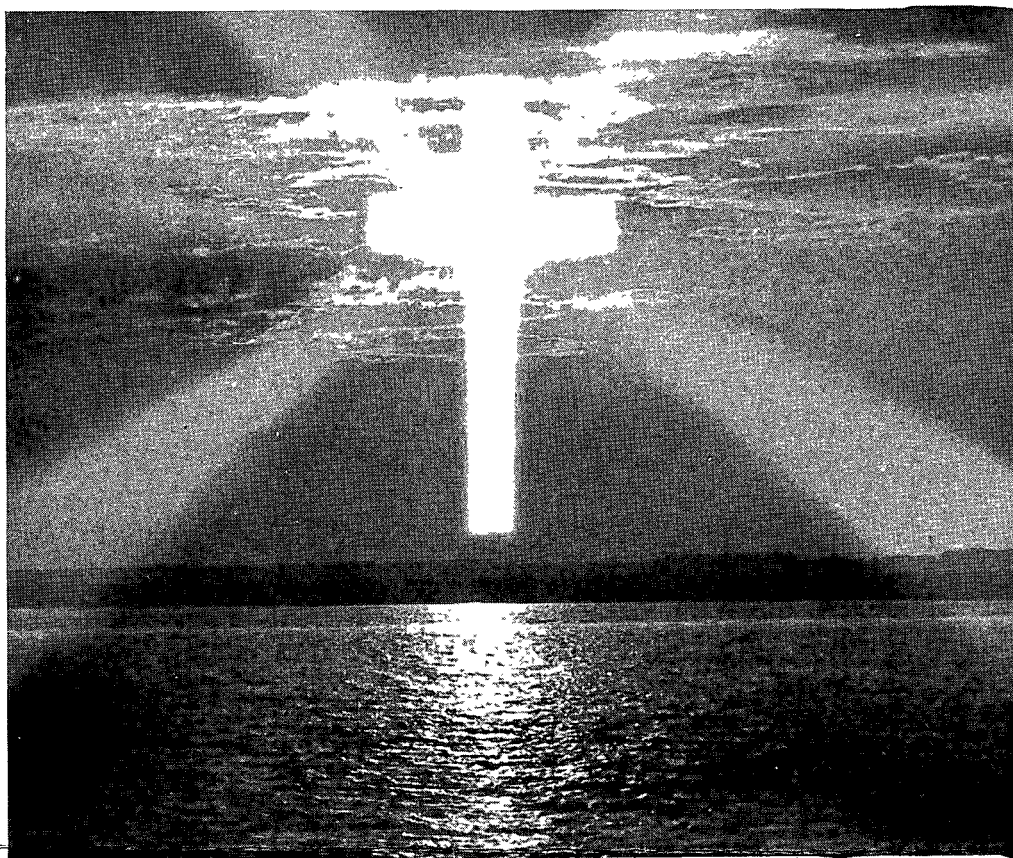
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THE MASTER LECTURES

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IN

THE LORD'S PRAYER SERIES

*Forgive Us Our Trespases As We
Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us*

Prayer

Forgive Us For What?

Forgiveness To the Rescue

What Forgiveness Does Not Do

Bookkeeping

The Other Side of The Shield

Forgive Enthusiastically

At Peace With All

Beloved Centurion:

As we come to the next phase in our study of the Lord's Prayer, we find a complete change in the structure of this wonderful arrangement which Jesus gave us. We arrive at a place which, if we are to repeat the Lord's Prayer, we must, in order to pray in sincerity, forgive them that trespass against us, that we may ask God to forgive us our trespasses.

This fourth clause in the Lord's Prayer is one of the most difficult for mankind to observe. I have heard even ministers of the gospel proclaim this to be true. It is difficult to forgive others who have deeply wronged us and it is difficult to forgive our enemies, but there can be no happiness if we are to bear grudges, and if we are to allow our hearts to be filled with hate towards those who have wronged us.

Some find it easy to forgive and others find it almost impossible, depending on the nature of the individual. It is not so difficult to forgive people who have committed small injustices against us, or who have hurt us in some small way but it is a greater hardship, and many feel they cannot possibly forgive those who have wronged them or injured them in such a way as to cause some great suffering to themselves, or perhaps brought a great suffering to some loved one in their family; but, notwithstanding all this, unless you learn to forgive, you are allowing that resentment and hate toward the one who has wronged you to hold a very important place in your life.

In other words, you are harboring a thing in your body which can cause disease, such as heart trouble, high blood pressure, nervous diseases; your "soul life" will suffer, and I am sure none of us care to live our lives under a shadow such as that. Remember, the object of your resentment is living with you at all times and you must get rid of it; by forgiving, you FREE yourself. The law of love can then work in your life for good, while, on the other hand, resentment can bring only evil. Not only that, but only in this way, by forgiveness, can you enter the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

There are people who say it is a sign of weakness to forgive one that has wronged them, but this is not true; it is only because we are so grievously hurt that we hold stubbornly to our relentlessness. It is easy to forgive, once you have made up your mind to do so, and what a grand and glorious feeling it is, for it not only makes the person who forgives happy and perhaps alters his or her whole life, but it brings about a feeling of release and an inward surge of joy. Willingness to forgive is a sign of strength. No truer words have ever been said than these by E. A. Chapin, "Never does the human soul appear so strong as when it foregoes revenge and dares to forgive an injury."

There is not one among us but that knows the wonderful feeling of having forgiven someone, perhaps for a big thing or a small thing, it doesn't matter. Remember, too, that until you have forgiven your enemies YOU ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO ASK GOD TO FORGIVE YOUR TRESPASSES. You cannot possibly repeat the Lord's Prayer as long as you have those whom you have not forgiven. It is not possible. Someone has said, "He who has not forgiven an enemy has never yet tasted one of the most sublime enjoyments of life", and I believe it was an old Spanish writer who said, "To return evil for good is devilish, to return good for good is human, but to return good for evil is God-like."

As we pray daily, we should ask God to bless those who have offended us in some way or another; - thus, we have forgiven them. We have washed our hearts clean. You, as a Mayan, must know this truth, that when we repeat the Lord's Prayer, we must, in all sincerity, forgive everyone who has wronged us. We cannot be slipshod about this practice.

Perhaps you have not been successful in having some of your prayers answered. If this is so, perhaps there is someone you need to forgive, some resentment you may have had for a long time against someone else; if this is true, after forgiving that person, you will probably find a great change taking place in your own life where your petitions to God are concerned. As you retire each night after each day's work, never let the sun sink on your day with a grudge in your heart against anyone. Forgive that person and do it gladly and with enthusiasm. You may feel for awhile that you can't do it - but you can, and, "They who forgive most shall be most forgiven." Lord Herbert expressed a great truth when he said, "He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself; for every man has need to be forgiven."

Always remember this, when you hurt someone or they hurt you, you can forgive and be forgiven, but the scars sometimes remain forever. Forgiveness is our deliverance, but let us not think just because we can forgive and be forgiven that we can continue in wrong doing and that all will be wiped away through the practice of forgiveness. As an example, we are all familiar with the hurts of a small child as he goes through the various stages of childhood. He plays with matches and is burned. His mother forgives for playing with matches, although he has been told so many times not to do so. She forgives him but he may carry the scars of the burn for life. Sometimes these scars serve as reminders, and perhaps he never disobeys his mother again in just that way. Let us forgive, and, in turn, be forgiven, but be sure to try forever afterward to be a better person, more humble, more tolerant, more patient and more thankful for the wonderful blessings that we enjoy. Always remember that all we have belongs to God. We are merely the stewards of it. Let us use everything in our life to glorify God.

Let us forgive those that trespass against us, in order that we may ask God to forgive our trespasses, but OF GREAT IMPORTANCE is our resolve to live each day in such a manner that there will be no trespasses on our part or on the part of others.

If nations would cast out all doubt, distrust and hate between each other, and if forgiveness were practiced between nations, there would be no wars. Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness or else forgiving another.

As we prepare our hearts for that which is to follow, let us repeat together the following prayer:

PRAYER

Our heavenly Father, we are many, and life grows very confusing to us at times. Forbid that we should ever forget that we are brothers, but if at times we do forget it, forgive us and help us to mend our ways and deal with each other as Thou wouldst have us do. Amen.

FORGIVE US FOR WHAT?

WE now pass to the fifth phase of the perfect prayer, moving ever more deeply into the realm of the spirit, but always in a practical and everyday way. When we come to comprehend even the general meaning of this prayer we shall not only have generated noble feelings and high ecstasies, but we shall also have done something still more lasting - we shall have learned how to live. We shall have learned how to live not only in ceremony and parade, but also in all the common dealings and relationships of life.

The petition we have before us now is a familiar one, but it will always bear a little more thought. It is, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." In other words, we now face the need for forgiveness. That acknowledgement some find it hard to make, for they do not think they need forgiveness. Even the best people do, however, for however good one's life may be we have all at least "come short of the glory of God", and we need some grace to help us bridge the gap. Besides, the study of the Lord's Prayer may reveal unsuspected things that need forgiving.

We are shown here that we need to ask forgiveness, but for what? The word used in the Lord's Prayer as recorded by Matthew is translated in one version "trespasses", and in a later version "debts". In some of the versions the prayer ~~as recorded by St. Luke has the word "sins".~~ Thus we have three words used in the same connection, and all presumably meaning the same thing. What, after all, is a sin but a trespass against someone's rights, and what is that but an unpaid debt of duty, an unmet obligation, a taking of some advantage without making it right with man and before God?

There must be a point to the fact that the word originally used by the Master is one which can be translated three ways, at least two of them indicating something involving human relationships, errors of one kind or another in our dealings with people. There is such a thing as a trespass against ourselves, something damaging to our integrity, our honor, our souls; but the Master leaves that for a later phase, and even then does not refer to it in connection with forgiveness. Such things carry their own judgments and have their own inner purgings, at least so far as the Lord's Prayer is concerned.

But this matter of wronging others stands out very clearly here as something to be taken before the throne of mercy, though even there, as we shall see later, it is something that we as well as God must do something about.

No matter what word we use, trespasses, debts, or sins, we shall mean the same thing, namely the matter of how we deal with and what we do to other people, for we are here to scatter good, not destruction and unhappiness, along the way.

FORGIVENESS TO THE RESCUE

WRONGS done to others have been sorrows to the doers ever since the dawn of conscience. The fifty-first Psalm shows us how David suffered over a trespass against another person. In the present busy, preoccupied, ruthless day many have grown rather unconcerned about what they do to their neighbors, their friends, and even to those who love them.

That is, of course, because they do not stop to think much about it. A distressing picture does not trouble us as long as we keep our eyes closed. But if once we open our eyes and see the devastation we have wrought in someone's life or the destructive influence we have sown in the paths of others, we find that we have one of the worst of sorrows on our hands.

Even that is not all. If we examine ourselves we discover that any wrong done to others damages our own lives as well. That helps us to realize how serious a scarred soul is. We may make amends to the person wronged, and we may patch up our own lives; BUT HEALING A DAMAGED SPIRIT IS SOMETHING ONLY GOD CAN DO. Hence our slipping away into some closet of silence, falling on our knees, or even on our faces, and with tearful eyes and through trembling lips murmuring, "Dear Heavenly Father, please forgive."

Then we see help on the way, help we never could provide, help that is not of this world. No writer who ever lived has pictured a rescue as AMAZING as this. In none of the history of rescue does such a deliverance appear. There could be none that would mean as much, for here eternal values are involved. And who is the deliverer? THE FORGIVER OF OUR TRESPASSES ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF DIVINE GRACE.

What is this forgiveness? It is the grace of God working on a guilty heart. ~~The doing of a wrong has wounded it with an un-~~seen weapon. The divine grace heals the wound. The doing of a wrong has tainted the heart with a poison. The divine grace removes it so it can do no further harm. Grace is an influence we cannot produce, but we can reflect it as it comes from God. It is something we cannot define, but that we can use. It is something not of this world, but that may be freely had by human beings. It is something the help of which we cannot seize, but that can always be had for the asking.

We might say that forgiveness is something that gives us a chance to start over again, of restoring the favor we had lost, of giving us our old standing before God. It is something that has to be given, for it cannot be bought and it is too priceless to be earned. We are always in debt to God, and it makes our obligation greater still. THE ONLY PAYMENT REQUIRED IS TO BE WILLING TO FORGIVE OTHERS AS WE OURSELVES HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN.

Thus is introduced into the life of the world an influence without which we could not continue to live with others, or even with ourselves. After all, WHAT GREATER WONDER IS THERE THAN THE MIRACLE OF FORGIVING GRACE?

WHAT FORGIVENESS DOES NOT DO

THE work of forgiving grace is one of the most wonderful things that ever happen to anyone in this life. It is a form of love, and love is the most powerful of all forces. There is a limit, however, even to what forgiveness can do.

Forgiveness restores us to the Father's favor after an error, but it cannot change the fact that the error was committed. It assures us that the offense is

no longer held against us, but it cannot wipe the regret out of our remembrance. It heals the wound in our lives, but the telltale scar remains.

As Jacob turned from his wrestling at the brook to go halting on his thigh the rest of his earthly days, so we may carry some limping traces of the past, even though forgiven. The wrongs may be forgiven, but who can stop the effects they have released into the world and the years?

This should be a sufficient answer to those who proposed to play fast and loose with life, counting on getting forgiven later on. They may get the forgiveness - who knows? - but it will only leave them regretting the more deeply that they so misinterpreted God's love and mercy.

God is not to be blamed for the fruitage of the seeds we sow. If we are hurt by them, it is our own doing. Though God forgives us, the fact that we have hurt ourselves remains. This is the simple justice of the law of cause and effect. Love forgives, but it cannot undo. The tuition in the school of experience is high but it is the only school in which some will learn.

A small boy was warned by his mother to keep away from the hot stove. He grew careless and got against it with one knee, which was burned deeply. His mother forgave him and did all she could to stop the pain and heal the hurt. At last it was healed, but all the rest of his life the scar was there to remind him. Love did all it could, but it could not change the fact that he had disobeyed. As an old saying used to run, "a bird with a broken wing never flies as high again."

We must realize that, while forgiveness assures us of God's love in spite of our mistakes, but the inevitable results of those mistakes are affected only by the fact that God's love will be with us to strengthen and help us. We can rise above them, but we cannot undo them. Without the divine forgiveness we would not even rise above them.

"Newness of life" is one of the great slogans of faith. This wonderful idea of renewal, and therefore of hope, runs all through the Bible. "Behold, I make all things new" is one of the great promises. It is even our assurance of a new world life, but what makes a new world? New people, with new and better ways of thinking and doing. More of these than not are likely to be people who have made their mistakes too, have seen their hopes fall in wreckage, and have gone to God with their pleas to forgive them and help them set things in order again.

When this is done for us we look about ourselves and exclaim, "Why everything seems different. The whole world is changed." For us old things have passed away, and all things have become new. When enough of us get our hearts set right the whole world really will change. New ideas and attitudes are all it takes.

BOOKKEEPING

LET us see if we cannot now make the matter clearer by the use of a revealing comparison. We can gather all this up under the figure of the process of keeping books. Somehow and somewhere Heaven undoubtedly keeps accounts with us. The Bible says so, under the figure of record books of life.

So let us say, for purposes of illustration, that books are kept recording our deeds and merits in credit and debit columns, just like the funds handled in conducting our personal and business affairs.

Figuratively speaking, of course, we some day get to looking over the records and find that we are headed for bankruptcy. Too many of the entries are in red ink. We count up what is receivable or can be turned into assets, and find it is not enough to put us in the black, as we say.

This condition is distressing to anyone conducting a business of any kind or just handling our personal funds, but it is most serious when it is the ledger on the way we live, and talk, and think, and feel. Whoever made the statement, "To heaven's forbearance we all are in debt", said something that shows how blessed a thing it is that the Master pointed out a way to satisfy that debt by asking forgiveness on the assumption that forgiveness is to be had, for "HE THAT ASKETH RECEIVETH, AND HE THAT SEEKETH FINDETH, AND TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH IT SHALL BE OPENED."

With the ordinary creditor a debit is a stubborn thing. All that will satisfy the account is enough credits to offset the red ink. This is the point where many debtors go down to ruin. Mercy does not enter into it. They may be given time but not always even that. The books must balance. The assumption is that only the debtor is responsible, though that is not always true. Many others may have helped to bring the situation about, but that does not help him now.

How different it is when the creditor is God. Even if the condition is an old and long-neglected one, something can always be done about it. The door is open to His presence. No receptionists stand in the way of a prompt audience with Him. The debtor may come freely. There is nothing to sign. The simple formula is one humbly spoken word, "FORGIVE".

The transgressor who has come asking for mercy is not told that we may have a little more consideration, but after that foreclosure will be sure. He is not lectured on what he should have done, for he cannot change that now. He may be told to manage his life better in the future, for that is within his power. The answer amounts to something like this:

"Very well, my child. You know your error and how to avoid repeating it. I will trust you. The red ink will be offset and its effect canceled. Your debit will be written off, and the account balanced."

That is all. The act of mercy is complete. The assurance means what it says and all it says. That is the end of the matter, though as we leave the Presence we seem to hear a voice say, "Do better now, my child."

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SHIELD

IF we have given the impression that this is all unconditional, and that there is no other side to the matter, let us now hasten to correct that impression. There is a condition that has to be met, and the Master would never leave us under any misapprehension about it. To some of us at some times that condition may be rather staggering; but it is right and just, and it works out to our own great benefit. In fact, it serves to set many things right and to heal many sad situations. It may even help us to avoid peril to our souls.

Let us always consider the complete language of the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Some translators make it even more exacting, and render it, "Forgive us our trespasses as we also have forgiven those who trespass against us." That is about the way it really works, too. Unforgivingness is quite a barrier for even the divine mercy to surmount.

The world and the lives and hearts of its people are cluttered up with too many grudges and hatreds. We keep books with each other too, and we are sometimes too slow about writing off the debits we have recorded against others for things they have or have not said and done. In the Parable of the Unjust Steward Jesus tells of a man who asked his master to forgive a debt, and the master did it. Then the forgiven one refused to overlook a claim he had against someone else. We might take advantage of a human being that way, but it is useless to attempt it with God. He knows our hearts too well.

A man said to the writer: "I had a hard time getting to the place where I could pray the Lord's Prayer. There was a person I had not been able to forgive for a wrong done. Every time I tried to repeat the prayer, when I came to this part of it the words stuck and I was afraid to say them. The implications were too serious. I worked with my heart a long time before I overcame that condition, but I never rested till I did, for I didn't want to be denied the use of this blessed prayer."

"While I was exploring the problem I came across something that brought me to with a start. I put myself in the unforgiven person's place and realized that maybe the situation was a problem to him too. Maybe I was standing in the way of his spiritual progress also. I saw that there was only one thing to do - write the whole matter off the books. Then I was able to pray the Lord's Prayer sincerely and I had peace in my heart."

This is an important thought to you as a Mayan, for all good and true members are striving for perfection and happiness can be achieved ONLY when we learn to hold no resentment in our hearts towards those who have wronged us.

Another man said: "I am handling that situation very carefully. I don't want to have trouble with that person. It is too damaging to me. Something might happen that would interfere with my right to use the Lord's Prayer. The price would be too great. I must keep on good terms with all."

This simple phrase, then, strikes straight at one of the deadliest of sins. Keeping its spirit opens the gates of mercy and peace to us as well as those with whom we deal. Debts of unkindness are hard to collect. Trying to do so only keeps alive the fires of resentment. The cheapest way out is to write them off the books and ask God to do the same with us.

FORGIVE ENTHUSIASTICALLY

THE other day the writer heard a Swami of the Vedanta faith say an unforgettable thing. "Do not dare to try to forgive grudgingly", he said. "Do not linger, and hesitate, and set conditions. Do not forgive as though you were making some great concession. FORGIVE JOYFULLY."

HALF-HEARTED FORGIVENESS IS SOMETHING LESS THAN WHAT FORGIVENESS SHOULD BE. Forgiveness that is a response to pleading, entreaty and argument, is forced and not spontaneous. Real forgiveness is enthusiastic, something which, like the forgiveness of God, is gladly given.

The parent of a disobedient child wants to forgive, but he has to wait till some desire for forgiveness is shown. Then it makes him happy to have the chance to speak the great word. He forgives enthusiastically, completely, and unconditionally. We must do the same. Cold forgiveness somehow does not take satisfactory effect. It seems to cancel itself out.

God is not sparing of any good thing. His works in nature are all abundant and so are His gifts to the human spirit. At best our lives must be reflections of His, so our forgivingness must be abundant too. It is better that way. Those with whom we deal we must be willing to forgive. It takes a willing and complete forgiveness to convince them. Relations are not good where people are distrustful of each other. The trouble between them can always break out anew. Vigorous forgiveness is more certain to heal it over permanently. If this lesson were learned wars could be eliminated.

It is better for the world life in general for our spirit of forgiveness to be abundant and enthusiastic. Fear and hatred are close partners with materialism and covetousness in keeping men and nations out of harmony with each other. Willing and enthusiastic forgiveness is, therefore, an antidote to some of our most serious and threatening problems.

Let us not forget the fact that abundant forgiveness carries a reflex blessing. Forgiveness is a healthy thing for the soul, and the more vigorous it is the better. It is one of the best of all spiritual exercises. Our HATES ARE THE MOST RUINOUS THINGS WE POSSESS. They sap and undermine the spirit more deeply and extensively every day we allow them to remain. Their cost in unhappiness mounts every day, for they are among the greatest of liabilities. For our own peace of mind, if there were no other reasons, we need to get rid of them.

Forgiveness often makes a fine basis for friendship. Two men had a dispute and harbored the grudge. Fortunately their work was on opposite sides of the world, so they did not meet. Suddenly and unexpectedly conditions placed them within a hundred miles of each other, working in the same organization and bound to be thrown much together. What were they to do.

One decided to forgive and act as though nothing had happened. The other did likewise, because the first had opened the way. They began to become acquainted, and found they liked each other. Each took pains to do the other every possible kindness. The result was one of the finest friendships, and it ended only when one died.

AT PEACE WITH ALL

IN his great poem "In Memoriam", Tennyson surveys at length and with deep reflectiveness the question of life and immortality. In that survey he comes to the matter of the nearness of the other world and the loved ones there. They try to manifest themselves to us, he says, but are often turned back by our turmoils and discords of this life. He concludes that we cannot know much of the other

world and its risen ones unless we can say, "MY SPIRIT IS AT PEACE WITH ALL." As a matter of fact, that is true even between ourselves and the visible ones about us.

MEDITATE, then, on that sentence as a formula for happy living in our own hearts, between us and others, and in the making of a condition of harmony in the world and throughout the universe. It is as hard for happiness to get through conditions of hate and malice as for the sunshine to get through heavy clouds. If you do not believe it, try to talk peace and happiness to an angry person or to one who cherishes a deep hatred for someone else.

You have no doubt known people whose entire lives were made unhappy by a cherished grudge against someone else. As long as their minds are on something else their reactions may be normal enough, but the moment they think of their hates they become hard, unhappy and unlovely. No one is ever at peace with himself when he cannot say, "My spirit is at peace with all."

What a vital and important area, then, the Lord's Prayer has now moved into! It is a two-way outlook with the sun shining on both sides. On one is a scene of peace between ourselves and the Eternal. On the other is a scene of peace between ourselves and all other people with us in God's family, especially any with whom we have not been at peace. THE SUNSHINE IS THE GRACE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS.

One of the great purposes of the Master's coming into the world was to establish just this kind of situation, and He moved out along that line early and decisively. He knew that people who carry grudges are unhappy. He knew that hate and anger ruin the hope of the world for peace and happiness. He knew that people who are not at peace with God, others, and themselves, would like to be delivered from that condition if a way were opened and there were something to help them overcome their so-called pride long enough to forgive and to seek forgiveness. Here, in a single sweeping sentence of prayer, our Lord shows the way.

The writer once entered the office of an elderly friend and found him quite busy. He said he was setting his house in order.

"No, I don't mean making a will or arranging property matter", he explained. "I mean I am trying to adjust matters of the spirit. I have made a list of all the people between whom and me there have been misunderstandings and unfortunate happenings. I am writing a letter to each one, telling him that I desire peace and good feeling between us, that I harbor no grudge and hope he does not, that I forgive and hope to be forgiven, and that I wish to be known by him as a friend with none but the best attitudes and intentions. I want to get all of this rubbish cleared out of my life once for all."

The writer happens to know that from that day on he was a happier man. The whole world grew more lovely when he could say that his spirit was at peace with all. When it is so with one, he is prepared thus far to avail himself of the Lord's Prayer.

As we come to the end of this phase of The Lord's Prayer Series which states a truth that can completely change not only your own life but perhaps the lives of others, make up your mind that this day you are going to forgive, completely, freely and joyously, everyone who has injured you. Free yourself from the bond of

resentment and repeat with us the following affirmation:

AFFIRMATION

I turn to God for pardon of anything within me that is wrong, having erased all bitterness between myself and all His other children. Now it is though all storm clouds had passed, and all the land is bright.

May God Bless Your Resolution to Forgive
Those Who Trespass Against You.

YOUR CLASS INSTRUCTOR

The next phase of THE MASTER PRAYER will take up the following subjects
under "LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL." -----

Prayer

The Setting

What Is Temptation?

Would God Lead Us Into Temptation?

Strength Through Testing

Deliver Us From Evil

What Is Evil?

The Power to Decide